



SYLLABUS

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Stephanie Echols

Contact Hours: 40

Language of Instruction: English

LONDON, ENGLAND

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this course is to introduce you to the field of Social Psychology. Social psychology is the scientific study of the way in which people's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are influenced by the social context—real or imagined. Social psychology seeks to understand individuals' subjective experiences and the way those experiences impact our behavior. We will discuss topics such as how we come to know and understand ourselves, how attitudes are formed and influence our behavior, and how groups influence our thoughts and actions. By the end of the course you will be able to describe and discuss influential theories in the field and the major findings related to them.

This course will also introduce you to research methods in social psychology. You will also acquire the skills to extract information from research presented both in the mass media and in scientific journals, and learn how to critically evaluate the scientific process. Although this course will specifically focus on the understanding and application of psychology research methods, mastering these skills will allow you to be a better consumer of research across the behavioral sciences.

Together, this course will provide you with the skills to evaluate different social psychological theories while paying attention to the practical implications of these ideas in our lives.

You will learn this information in a combined lecture/discussion format. Each week will include a lecture followed by a seminar discussion of a primary source research article. Please be prepared to actively engage with this material and your colleagues in class, be open to new ideas, and relate the ideas and methods you learn in this course to your everyday experiences.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The aims of this course are to familiarize you with the concepts, theories, and methods of social psychology and to help you recognize the influence of the environment on behavior, thoughts, and feelings.

Expected Learning Outcomes:

- Learn about important theories and research findings in social psychology
- Learn about how social psychology uses science to create new knowledge
- Learn how to critically read and evaluate scientific arguments.
- Become a more thoughtful consumer of research in your daily life
- Be able to identify real-world applications of Social Psychology research.
- Develop your skills as a critical thinker about all topics, not just psychology

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODOLOGY

The sessions combine introductory lectures, discussions and group work. Students will be expected to actively prepare for all classes. The classes are highly participative.

COURSE READING

Course readings will be posted online as PDFs

RECOMMENDED TEXTS

Social Psychology, 4th Edition

Eliot R. Smith, Diane M Mackie, Heather M. Claypool

Psychology Press

ISBN-13: 978-1848728943

METHOD OF EVALUATION (GRADING)

Your grade for this class will be based on 5 things:

1. **Exams:** There will be a midterm exam and a final exam. The exams will include questions taken from the text, lecture, and the supplemental readings. There is no way to cover all of the information contained in the textbook during lecture, so doing well on the exams will require that you learn from the textbook, supplemental readings, and the lecture. The exams will require that you be able to apply the general principles from class to novel specific examples. Exams will be multiple choice and short answer.
2. **Research Paper:** You will write one research paper in this term. For this assignment, you will pick a social psychological theory discussed in class or in the textbook. Next, you will generate a specific, testable hypothesis derived from that theory that you can test or refute in a simple experiment that you conduct yourself. You will then write a 1000-1500 word report on your observations, which will include a description of the social psychological theory, a detailed description of the research method you used or behaviors that you observed, an analysis relating those behaviors to the theory or theories discussed in class, and a discussion of alternative explanations for their observations. You will submit an outline of your experiment to Dr. Echols for approval, and the report is due in Week 9. More details on the papers will be made available online.

3. Participation: The participation grade will be awarded for consistent participation in the class and discussion. Active participation is an indicator that you have prepared for discussion by reading the necessary materials, and that you are able to articulate your ideas to your colleagues each week. You are advised to come to class with two or three questions prepared about the reading to facilitate engagement with their classmates.

4. Reading Journal: You are asked to keep a detailed journal reflecting on the assigned readings and lectures. You should write approximately 250 words per class day, which can take the form of either bullet points or complete sentences. Each journal entry should integrate material from multiple readings/concepts. Possible content includes raising questions about particularly confusing aspects of the readings, remarking on applications to your life or the lives of others, noting contradictions or agreements between different concepts, suggesting potential follow-up research, or critiquing methods or conclusions in the readings. Please do not summarize. You will receive full credit for complete, thoughtful entries that demonstrate a sophisticated engagement with the readings (including a substantial amount of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation). Journals will receive only partial credit if they fail to meet these standards, or if they contain multiple missing entries.

Grading:

Your final grade in the course is based on your total points accumulated on the two tests, paper, participation, and reading journal, as described above.

To summarize:

Participation (15 points)

Reading Journal (10 points)

Midterm (20 points)

Research Paper (25 points)

Final Exam (30 points)

Total = 100 points

COURSE SCHEDULE

Reading is to be completed before the first class for which it is listed.

Week One: Introduction to Social Psychology

Textbook Reading: Smith, Mackie, & Claypool, Chapters 1 & 2

Recommended: Jordan, C. & Zanna, M. (1999). How to read a journal article in social psychology. In R. F. Baumeister (Ed.), *The Self in Social Psychology* (pp. 461-470). Philadelphia: Psychology.

Week Two: Seeing and Thinking about Other People

Textbook Reading: Smith, Mackie, & Claypool, Chapters 3

Discussion Reading: Balciotis, E., & Dunning, D. (2006). See what you want to see:

Motivational influences on visual perception. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 91, 612 – 625. (Studies 1 – 3)

Week Three: Attitudes & Behavior

Textbook Reading: Smith, Mackie, & Claypool, Chapters 8

Discussion Reading: Arcuri, et al. (2008). Predicting the vote: Implicit attitudes as predictors of the future behavior of decided and undecided voters. *Political Psychology*, 29, 369 – 387.

Week Four: The Self & Social Identity

Textbook Reading: Smith, Mackie, & Claypool, Chapters 4 & 6

Discussion Reading: Spencer, S. J., Steele, C M., & Quinn, D. M. (1999). Stereotype threat and women's math performance. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 35, 4 – 28.

Week Five: Stereotyping & Prejudice

Textbook Reading: Smith, Mackie, & Claypool, Chapter 5

Discussion Reading: Uhlmann, E. L., & Cohen, G. L. (2005). Constructed criteria: Redefining merit to justify discrimination. *Psychological Science*, 16(6), 474 – 480.

Week Six: Midterm & Research Proposal Discussion

Midterm (Weeks 1 -5)

Week Seven: Persuasion

Textbook Reading: Smith, Mackie, & Claypool, Chapter 7

Discussion Reading: Burkley, E. (2010). The role of self-control in resistance to persuasion. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 34, 419 - 431.

Week Eight: Group Influence and Conformity

Textbook Reading: Smith, Mackie, & Claypool, Chapter 9

Discussion Reading: Prentice, D.A., & Miller, D.T. (1993). Pluralistic ignorance and alcohol use on campus: Some consequences of misperceiving the social norm. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 64, 243-256.

Week Nine: Close Relationships

Textbook Reading: Smith, Mackie, & Claypool, Chapter 11

Discussion Reading: Halsey, L. G., Hubera, J. W., Buftona, R. D. J., & Little, A. C. (2010). An explanation for enhanced perceptions of attractiveness after alcohol consumption. *Alcohol*, 44, 307-313.
Research Papers Due

Week Ten: Aggression & Altruism

Textbook Reading: Smith, Mackie, & Claypool, Chapter 13 & 14

Discussion Reading: Carnagey, N. L., Anderson, C. A., & Bushman, B. J. (2007). The effect of video game violence on physiological desensitization to real-life violence. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 43, 489 – 496.